R/V REGINA MARIS

— Ship to Shore News —

SEARCHLIGHT Vol. 8 No. 26 7 November 1983

After a week-end of sightseeing around Bermuda, both crew and students set to work in earnest. While we made use of this comparatively dry climate by giving REGINA a new coat of paint, the students, with the help of the library and staff at the Bermuda Biological Station, began to formulate their Coral Reef Ecology projects. Through diving expeditions to the surrounding reefs, they were introduced to the practical techniques needed for the projects they were formulating, to be completed on St. John's Island by the end of the month. By the week's end, REGINA looked bright and shipshape, and our students had a firm idea of how to conduct their research projects.

After a day of rest, we set sail with a fresh following breeze. Although we escaped gales on the first leg of our voyage, it soon became evident that a blow was now building to the southeast. Many of the students were eager to experience a gale on a square-rigger. By the next day, we were in the thick of it, with rolling decks awash and two people at the helm, and a lone square topsail driving us before a full gale. The wind and the sea in this state can be quite beautiful. The seas soon built to twenty feet; wave-tops leaped into the wind and left a tracery of spindrift across the sea. REGINA made good time on her way to the islands.

As I write, the gale has blown away. REGINA is rolling over a lively, but blue and sparkling sea. All the square sails are set, and many pieces of bedding and laundry are drying in the warm breeze. As we roll off to the south at a steady pace, we can now relax and enjoy a sight only rarely seen in this age: one of the last square-riggers earning her living while providing us with both knowledge and an experience that is truly unique.

Respectfully submitted,

Evan Logan, Master
J. Perran Ross, Chief Scientist
ORV REGINA MARIS

Copyright Ocean Research and Education Society, Inc. 1983

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

The response of you, our members, to our recent request for help in recruiting students and members, and raising funds for our Regina Maris Fund, has been encouraging. Already, as of November 17, we have received over $3,000.00, from 40 different members; an average of $75 from each. If each of the rest of you would do as well, we would have $76,500.00. A few big donations would then bring us well on our way to our goal.

Many of you have also contributed names of potential students and members. With your help, we are well on our way to filling our up-coming expeditions. We still have spaces on the next few, however, and hope you'll continue to help us spread the word about the unique opportunity our program provides.

Thank you for your help.

George Nichols, Jr., MD
President

The gale that ushered us briskly out of Bermuda had blown away, but in order to shoot the sun over the roughly rolling sea I had to perch atop the pilot-house to get a vantage point over the wave tops. A high salinity count verified that we had entered the evaporation zone known as the Horse Latitudes. Our visiting scientist, Dr. Tom Hruby from the Mass. Audubon Society, was conducting experiments on the feasibility of harvesting Sargassum weed, which contains petrochemical substitutes used by the plastics industry.

Instead of enjoying the calm sunny weather usually found in this area, we found ourselves beating into fresh head winds and thunder showers as we slogged through a rough, grey sea. Finally, the seventh day dawned bright and clear. A gentle following breeze filled all of REGINA's sails; the mizzen shrouds were hung with laundry; and the vision of a tropical paradise was regained. The next dawn revealed the contours of the Virgin Islands dead ahead. It was "all hands on deck" to help maneuver REGINA under sail between the small islands and amid a flotilla of little charter boats. Happy holiday sailors waved, shouted compliments, and took pictures of us as we rounded up and dropped the hook in seven fathoms in Caneel Bay.

After officially entering the U.S. Virgin Islands around the corner at Cruz Bay, we moved to the east end of St. John to re-anchor at Hurricane Hole, where the students began the projects they planned during our stay in Bermuda. The first task was to make a quick survey of the study area, become familiar with its general features, and choose study sites appropriate to each project. Hurricane Hole provides a broad diversity of habitats to study. There are areas of fringing reef, broad belts of sea grass, coral rubble, and patches of bare sand. Underwater visibility is very good at the moment, and we have just discovered in twenty feet of water a series of large coral heads that we had not noticed on previous visits.

The students soon began to work in earnest, discussing locations and techniques and fabricating many unique contraptions to aid in the collection of data. Everyone is spending several hours a day snorkeling in the warm water. Kathy and Teresa are marking damselfish territories, while Rosemary observes yellow-tail damselfish behavior. Mark and Jeff are collecting a lot of data on the competitive interaction of corals; Scott is surveying coral diversity, and Don is using paper chromatography to compare the pigments of symbiotic algae in coral. Chantal is painstakingly mapping out the bottom topography and collecting temperature and salinity measurements. Cortland is observing the group behavior of wrasses, and Steve has built wire enclosures to exclude herbivorous fish and observe their effects on the growth of algae. These widely diverse projects will expand our understanding of this ecosystem.

Work continued until Monday, when we moved to St. Thomas to replenish our water supply. Back in the field on Tuesday, the students were guided by National Park Rangers on a walk along reef and beach areas on the northern side of St. John. Even though our study site is outside the boundaries of the St. John Park, we have enjoyed a cooperative relationship with park personnel, who are interested in the techniques and results that are evolving from our studies. Ranger Michael Sutton has come aboard to give us a slide presentation on management problems in the marine park. Tomorrow we will take another walk along the Reef Bay Trail, to a typically diverse floral area which includes waterfalls, rock-bound pools etched with ancient petroglyphs, and the ruins of a century-old sugar cane factory.

Respectfully submitted,

Evan Logan, Master
J. Perran Ross, Chief Scientist
ORV REGINA MARIS

Copyright Ocean Research and Education Society, Inc. 1983

The Ocean Research and Education Society, Inc.
19 Harbor Loop
Gloucester, MA 01930

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Gloucester, MA
Permit No. 16